

Priesthood Authority & Lineage

Part 2 – The Seed of Cain & Priesthood Restrictions

Study guide Overview

Overview

God has always designated certain lineages with specific Priesthood responsibilities, this is as true in this dispensation as in the days of Moses.

It is a result and a recognition of different choices, responsibilities or degrees of valiancy in the pre-mortal world, before coming to earth.

It is not an excuse for treating any of God's children with any less respect and consideration.

Study Suggestions

Please print out this guide, and prayerfully read and ponder over the teachings of the scriptures and the Prophet Joseph Smith on these matters, asking yourself any of the question included here, and noting down any additional questions that arise from your study. (If you have a spouse or young adult children try to study these things with them.)

Begin your study with prayer, praying for God to reveal the truth to you through His Spirit.

Consider the questions on the "Questions to Ponder" page.

Pay special attention to the following passage –

(It and others are included at the end of this guide if you do not have the books)

Nehemiah 7:63-64; 13:23-29

Abraham 1:21-22,26-27; 3:18-23

Find answers within the scriptures, the teachings of Joseph Smith, the Journal of Discourses etc. (Discussing them with your spouse or a close friend if possible)

Be conscious of the Spirit throughout your studies, and close with prayer.

Make a list of any additional questions you might have, to share with the Seventy who gave you this guide.

Questions to Ponder

The Priesthood & the Pre-existence

Note: The first two questions are from the previous supplementary study guide

Were men fore-ordained (or set apart) before mortality to fulfill responsibilities on earth?

Read Jeremiah 1:5
Alma 13:3
Abraham 3:22-23
Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 365

Let us look at the example of the Sons of Aaron & Levi

- Did God determine who would be born into those tribes?
- Was there the intention to continue authority amongst their descendants?

Deuteronomy 32:8 & Acts 17:26
D&C 13:1

Were there different degrees of valiancy and progress before mortality that affect our positions here?

Alma 13:4-5
Abraham 3:18-23

Were there Priesthood restrictions to those of certain lineages in ancient times?

Ezra 2:61-62
Nehemiah 7:63-64; 13:27-29

The Curse & Mark of Cain, and his Descendants

Being of which lineage prevented men from holding the Priesthood in mortality?

Abraham 1:26 Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood.

27 Now, Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood, notwithstanding the Pharaohs would fain claim it from Noah, through Ham, therefore my father was led away by their idolatry;

Cain's curse

Joseph Smith: "Cain's Priesthood proved a cursing to him because of his unrighteousness."
Joseph Smith, 1840, History of the Church 2:213.

Joseph Smith: "A black skin ... has ever been a curse that has followed an apostate of the holy Priesthood." (*Times & Seasons 6:857*)

Cain's descendants

Moses 5:22 And Enoch also beheld the residue of the people which were the sons of Adam; and they were a mixture of all the seed of Adam save it was the seed of Cain, for the seed of Cain were black, and had not place among them.

Joseph Smith spoke taught that "Negroes are descendants of Cain" (*19 June 1831, History of the Church 1:75*), and later spoke of "the Negroes or sons of Cain", thus equating the black race and lineage of Cain together. (*Joseph Smith Journal, 25 January 1842; History of the Church 4:501*)

Canaan's lineage

Abraham 1:21 Now this king of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham, and was a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth.

22 From this descent sprang all the Egyptians, and thus the blood of the Canaanites was preserved in the land.

Canaan's curse

JST Genesis 9:29 And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

30 ... Canaan shall be his servant, and a veil of darkness shall cover him, that he shall be known among all men.

Knowledge of these Priesthood restrictions were received by revelation

Saturday, May 31st, 1879, at the house of President Abraham O. Smoot, Provo City, Utah, Utah County, at 5 O'Clock p.m.

President John Taylor, Elders Brigham Young, Abraham O. Smoot, Zebedee Coltrin and L. John Nuttall met, and the subject of ordaining Negroes to the Priesthood was presented.

Brother Coltrin: The Spring that we went up in Zion's Camp in 1834, Brother Joseph sent Brother J. P. Green and me out to gather up means to assist in gathering out the Saints from Jackson County, Missouri. On our return home we got in conversation about the Negro having a right to the Priesthood, and I took up the side that he had no right. Brother Green argued that he had. The subject got so warm between us that he said he would report me to Brother Joseph when we got home for preaching false doctrine, which doctrine that I advocated was that the Negro could not hold the Priesthood. "all right" said I "I hope you will." And when we got to Kirtland, we both went to Brother Joseph's office together to make our returns, and Brother Green was as good as his word and reported to Brother Joseph that I said that the Negro could not hold the Priesthood. Brother Joseph kind of dropped his head and rested it on his hand for a minute, and then said, "Brother Zebedee is right, for the Spirit of the Lord saith the Negro has no right nor cannot hold the Priesthood." He made no reference to Scripture at all, but such was his decision. I don't recollect ever having any conversation with him afterwards on this subject. But I have heard him say in public that no person having the least particle of Negro blood can hold the Priesthood.

Journal of L. John Nuttall 1:290-93.

In those years when I became acquainted with Joseph myself in the Far West, about the year 1838, I received from Brother Joseph substantially the same instructions. It was on my application to him, what should be done with the Negro in the South, as I was preaching to them. He said I could baptize them by consent of their masters, but not to confer the Priesthood upon them.

Abraham O. Smoot (same meeting as above).

President Young held to the doctrine that no man tainted with Negro blood was eligible to have the Priesthood; that President Taylor held to the same doctrine, claiming to have been taught it by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

George Q. Cannon, Council Minutes, 22 August 1900.

In this branch [in New York State] there is a coloured Brother [Walker Lewis], an Elder ordained by Elder William Smith [in 1843] while he was a member of the Church, contrary, though to the order of the Church on the law of the Priesthood, as descendants of Ham are not entitled to that privilege.

Journal of William I. Appleby, 19 May 1847.

Any Priesthood accidentally given to those not qualified to hold it is not valid

The Prophet Joseph Smith was commanded by God to withdraw the Priesthood from Elijah Abel, and revoke the ordination. ... Although there is no official Church record as to the revocation, Elijah Abel affirmed the fact to my father, Thomas A. Shreeve, when both were living in the Salt Lake 10th Ward, during 1872-77. At the time, Brother Abel told young Thomas, who baptised Abel's grandchildren that the Prophet Joseph "came to him with tears in his eyes one day, and told him that he had been commanded by the Lord to withdraw the holy Priesthood from him."

Caleb A. Shreeve, Sr, Salt Lake Tribune, "Forum", 26 October 1970.

Brother Coltrin further said Brother Abel was ordained a Seventy ... and when the Prophet Joseph learned of his lineage he was dropped from the Quorum, and another was put in his place.

Meeting, 31 May 1879, as related by Willian E. Berrett, Mormonism and the Negro.

God will not remove these restrictions until (at least) sometime during the millennium

President George Q. Cannon remarked that the Prophet [Joseph] taught this doctrine: That the seed of Cain could not receive the Priesthood, nor act in any of the offices of the Priesthood until the seed of Abel should come forward and take precedence over Cain's offspring.

*22 August 1895, Minutes of Meeting of General Authorities,
The Way to Perfection (1931), Joseph Fielding Smith, p. 110.*

President [George Q.] Cannon remarked upon this subject, as he said, he had on a prior occasion when this subject was under consideration, that he had understood that the Prophet Joseph [Smith] had said during this lifetime, that there would be a great wrong perpetrated if the seed of Cain were allowed to have the Priesthood before Abel should have posterity to receive it, and this curse therefore was to remain upon the seed of Cain until the time should come that Abel should have posterity. He understood that that time could not come until Abel should beget spirits in the eternal worlds and those spirits obtain tabernacles;

(George Albert Smith Papers, Manuscripts Division, Marriott Library, University of Utah)

Note: Considering that Abel was killed by Cain before he had any children, then his seed can only come forward during the Millennium, so Joseph is saying that Negro's can't receive the Priesthood until that time.

Zechariah 14:20 ... and in that day [when Jesus comes to earth again] there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

What would be the results of trying to give that lineage the Priesthood earlier?

“I say the curse is not yet taken off the sons of Canaan, neither will it be until it is affected by as great power as caused it to come; and the people who interfere the least with the purposes of God in this matter, will come under the least condemnation before Him; and those that are determined to pursue a course, which shows an opposition, and a feverish restlessness against the decrees of the Lord, will learn, when perhaps it is too late for their own good.”

Joseph Smith, Messenger & Advocate 2:290; History of the Church 2:438.

“Now I tell you what I know: when the mark was put upon Cain, Abel's children were in all probability young; the Lord told Cain that he should not receive the blessings of the Priesthood, nor his seed, until the last of the posterity of Abel had received the Priesthood, until the redemption of the earth. If there never was a prophet or apostle of Jesus Christ [that] spoke it before, I tell you, this people that are commonly called Negroes are the children of old Cain. I know they are; I know that they cannot bear rule in the Priesthood, for the curse on them was to remain upon them until the residue of the posterity of Michael and his wife receive the blessings the seed of Cain would have received had they not been cursed, and hold the keys of the Priesthood until the times of the restitution shall come, and the curse be wiped off from the earth and from Michael's seed. Then Cain's seed will be had in remembrance and the time come when the curse should be wiped off.

Now, then, in the Kingdom of God on the earth, a man who has the African blood in him cannot hold one jot nor tittle of Priesthood. Why? Because they are the true eternal principles the Lord Almighty has ordained, and who can help it? Men cannot, the angels cannot, and all the powers of earth and hell cannot take it off; but thus saith the Eternal I am, what I am, I take it off at my pleasure, and not one particle of power can that posterity of Cain have until the time comes that says he will have it taken away.

... Were the children of God to mingle their seed with the seed of Cain it would not only bring the curse of being deprived of the power of the priesthood upon themselves but they entail it upon their children after them, and they cannot get rid of it.”

(Brigham Young Addresses 2:77, 5 January 1852)

“Whenever the seed of Judah mingled with the seed of Cain, they lost their Priesthood and all blessings. As an ensample – let the Presidency, Twelve, Seventies, High Priests, Bishops, and all the Authorities say, now we will all go and mingle with the seed of Cain and they may have all the privileges they want. We lift our hands to heaven in support of this – that moment we lose the Priesthood and all blessings, and we would not be redeemed until Cain was.”

(Brigham Young Addresses 2:81, 5 January 1852)

Note: Joseph said that we should “never inquire at the hand of God for special revelation only in the case of there being no previous revelation to suit the case” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 22, see *Doctrine and Covenants* 8:10; 88:65). So we see the impropriety of seeking to repeal anything God has revealed, if we persist eventually we may get the answer we want, but it will be to our own detriment.

Cain's descendents are still God's children and should be treated as such

Joseph Smith

“Elder Hyde inquired the situation of the negro. I replied, they came into the world slaves mentally and physically. Change their situation with the whites, and they would be like them. They have souls, and are subjects of salvation. Go into Cincinnati or any city, and find an educated negro, who rides in his carriage, and you will see a man who has risen by the powers of his own mind to his exalted state of respectability. The slaves in Washington are more refined than many in high places, and the black boys will take the shine of many of those they brush and wait on.

Elder Hyde remarked, "Put them on the level, and they will rise above me." I replied, if I raised you to be my equal, and then attempted to oppress you, would you not be indignant and try to rise above me, as did Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, and many others, who said I was a fallen Prophet, and they were capable of leading the people, although I never attempted to oppress them, but had always been lifting them up? Had I anything to do with the negro, I would confine them by strict law to their own species, and put them on a national equalization.”

(History of the Church, Volume 5, p. 216)

Brigham Young

“Negroes should be treated like human beings, and not worse than dumb brutes. For their abuse of that race, the whites shall be cursed, unless they repent.” *(Journal of Discourses 10:111)*

“The Lamanites or Indians are just as much the children of our Father and God as we are. So also are the Africans.” *(Journal of Discourses 11:272)*

“Men will be called to Judgment for the way they have treated the Negro.” *(J.D. 10:250)*

References

Ezra 2:61 And of the children of the priests ... which took a wife of the daughters of Barzilla the Gileadite, and was called after their name:

v62 These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. (See D&C 85:11-12)

Nehemiah 7:63 And of the priests: ... which took [one] of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife, and was called after their name.

v64 These sought their register [among] those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood.

Neh 13:27 Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange [foreign] wives? (see v. 23)

v29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites.

Alma 13:

3 And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.

4 And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren.

5 Or in fine, in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren; thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared —

Abraham 3:

18 Howbeit that he made the greater star; as, also, if there be two spirits, and one shall be more intelligent than the other, yet these two spirits, notwithstanding one is more intelligent than the other, have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are eternal, or eternal.

19 And the Lord said unto me: These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all.

20 The Lord thy God sent his angel to deliver thee from the hands of the priest of Elkenah.

21 I dwell in the midst of them all; I now, therefore, have come down unto thee to declare unto thee the works which my hands have made, wherein my wisdom excelleth them all, for I rule in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, in all wisdom and prudence, over all the intelligences thine eyes have seen from the beginning; I came down in the beginning in the midst of all the intelligences thou hast seen.

22 Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

23 And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said:

These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.

“Cain might have been the head of this Priesthood, under his father, but instead of exercising his birthright on the principles of righteousness, and in accord with the powers of heaven, he was befogged and understood not his true position; and his offering was not accepted. When Cain found that his offering was not accepted, and his brother Abel’s was accepted, Satan tempted him...he became possessed with the spirit of murder. Cain lost his privilege ... and the blessing fell to one more worthy, and the rights of the Priesthood passed to the next son of Adam, which according to the Bible record was Seth, who magnified the Priesthood, which was sealed upon him by his father [Adam]; and from him [Seth] it descended upon the righteous of his posterity. There are many instances, from that time forward, of which the Scriptures speak of this birthright continuing among the descendants of Seth, until it came to Noah and his sons, of which sons Shem [his firstborn] received the blessings pertaining to the Priesthood. Abraham came through Shem, and the Savior came through this lineage; and through this blessing of Noah upon Shem, the Priesthood continued through his seed; while the offspring of Ham inherited a curse, and it was because, as a revelation teaches, some of the blood of Cain became mingled with that of Ham’s family, and hence they inherited the curse.” (*Orson Hyde, J.D. 21:370*)